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New Orleans District

News Release

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July 31, 2002

Public is invited to meeting to comment on deepening Morgan City channels

See below: map of project channels

NEW ORLEANS – The public is invited to give comments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the issues involving deepening navigation channels from the Morgan City area to the Gulf of Mexico from 20 to 35 feet.

The comments will be heard at a meeting scheduled at 7 p.m., August 8, 2002, in the Morgan City Auditorium, 728 Myrtle St., in Morgan City.

The Corps of Engineers and its local partner, the Port of Morgan City <http://www.portofmc.com> will share the study's \$4.4 million cost 50-50.

At present, the authorized depth is 20 feet for the Atchafalaya River below the railroad bridge in Morgan City, Atchafalaya Bay, Gulf of Mexico and Bayous Chene, Boeuf and Black. These channels total about 48 miles in length

The Corps is beginning a feasibility study on whether the deepening of these channels down to as much as 35 feet would result in benefits to the Nation's economy from the fabrication of oil and gas platforms in the Morgan City area that would otherwise be fabricated overseas. Deepening channels in the area to 35 feet would add about 13 miles to the channel's seaward end.

As offshore-oil exploration has moved into deeper water, many of the larger platforms required for deepwater production are being built in foreign countries because, among other factors, there are not enough suitable fabrication yards in the United States with channels deep enough to launch today's platforms. In addition, the service and supply vessels for the deepwater rigs require deeper access channels.

The public is invited to comment on the issues and alternatives to be addressed in the environmental impact statement (EIS) that will be prepared with the study.

EIS resources and issues

The tentative list of resources and issues that would be evaluated in the environmental impact statement includes: tidally influenced coastal wetlands (marshes and swamps), aquatic resources, commercial and recreational fisheries, wildlife resources, essential fish habitat, water quality, air quality, threatened and endangered species, recreation resources and cultural resources.

Socioeconomic topics that would be evaluated in the environmental impact statement include navigation, flood protection, business and industrial activity, employment, land use, property values, public/community facilities and services, tax revenues, population, community and regional growth, transportation, housing, community cohesion and noise.

Alternatives for study

Alternatives to be considered in the study at present include the enlargement of the existing access channels in Bayous Chene, Boeuf and Black, in the Atchafalaya River south of the railroad bridge in Morgan City, and in Atchafalaya Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

Project depths ranging from the existing depth of 20 feet mean low Gulf to a depth of 35 feet mean low Gulf will be considered. Other alternatives include using material dredged to construct and maintain the deeper channels to create and restore wetlands. At present, the authorized depth is 20 feet for the Atchafalaya River below the railroad bridge in Morgan City, Atchafalaya Bay, Gulf of Mexico and Bayous Chene, Boeuf and Black.

Questions

Address questions about the **proposed study** to Project Manager Joey Dykes, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CEMVN-PM-C, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, La. 70160-0267, telephone 504-862-2507, e-mail joseph.l.dykes@mvn02.usace.army.mil.

Address questions about the **environmental impact statement** to Michael Salyer, CWMVN-PM-RS, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, La. 70160-0267, telephone 504-862-2037, e-mail michael.r.salyer@mvn02.usace.army.mil.

Attached: Map of project channels.

